



California Legislature

## Senate Rules Committee

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#### California Senate Mission

#### Central America: El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama

July 14-23, 2014

#### Purpose:

The California Senate will send a delegation to El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama to strengthen legislative ties and exchange information on a number of public policy areas, including trade and investment, immigration reform, goods movement, and port infrastructure and security. Given the recent increase in Central American migrants to the US border, particularly unaccompanied minors, this visit also will inform the delegation as to the political, economic and social environments on the ground in El Salvador and Guatemala, two of the three main countries from which migrants are arriving. California is one of four states where the vast majority of Central American immigrants settle. The delegation will explore what impacted-states like California can do to meet the humanitarian challenges presented by this situation.

In El Salvador, the delegation will seek to make new connections that will enrich the interchange between the government, business and civic sectors in California and El Salvador. Many people-to-people and humanitarian links exist between the two regions due to the close to 600,000 El Salvadorans living in California. However, this delegation would like to expand the network of official contacts in order to grow relations in the immediate future and have a channel of communications regarding sensitive issues such as migration. Meetings will be held with President Salvador Sánchez Cerén and other high-ranking officials at the Legislative Assembly and relevant Ministries. The delegation also would like to study the impacts of CAFTA and the Partnership for Growth in improving economic development and increasing security in El Salvador. Most importantly, they would like to learn about efforts that can be made to further engage institutions, organizations and businesses in California in alignment with these objectives.

In Guatemala, the delegation also will pursue the expansion of official contacts and further encourage the growth of government, economic, educational and social links between California and Guatemala. The Guatemalan community is over 330,000 strong in California at last count and has particular concern for policies regarding immigration reform, workforce standards and means to educational and economic attainment for underserved communities. The delegation will meet with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of migrant issues as well as the President of the Congressional Committee for Migrants of Guatemala. In light of CAFTA, the delegation would like to examine the challenges to growth in Guatemala to better understand the path that needs to be charted going forward. The delegation is interested in collaborative efforts with Guatemala that promote economic development and create jobs, while also fostering a secure society.

In Panama, the delegation will work towards continued advancement of the strategic partnership between California and Panama. The delegation seeks to meet with top officials in the Panama Canal Authority, National Assembly and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While Panama has a much smaller immigrant presence in California, its location and role in global trade make it vital to California's prosperity and trade environment. The delegation would like to learn firsthand about the current expansion of the Canal Zone and its implications for growth in trade and goods movement in the hemisphere and in California.

Overarching goals for the trip include demonstrating California's committed support for strong democratic institutions in these important partners, strengthening people-to-people relationships, and informing California policy making.